

AUGUST 16, 1984

The big league politicians aren't the only ones campaigning in 1984. After we missed the spring rains, I've been doing a lot of politicking with anyone that I thought wasn't burdened by a bunch of hungry cows or sheep.

Every outsider I've met, from the fossil fuel miners to the wool and mohair buyers, have been given a smile that'd make the pros around Fritz Mondale's camp think they were going to have to go through corrective cosmetic surgery to stay in the race.

Word is out over at Mertzon that an oil boom is starting. I laughed so hard the other morning at a joke a lease broker told that my suspenders slipped out of adjustment. He sure is better company this year than he was in other times. A year ago I found his patter awfully tiresome. Now that my business hours have been extended to 24 hours, seven days a week, I can fit in more hombres than I could when it was raining. Also, the size of the proposition doesn't have to be nearly so large.

One thing I've noticed about oilmen is that they sure do have long memories. I sat down at a table in a coffee joint in San Angelo some time ago that included a land man with whom my brother and I once had a minor difference of opinion on the use of a road across part of the ranch.

In all the emotion that goes with those little right-of-way spat, I must have said something that hurt his feelings. Before my coffee had arrived, he asked whether I was still interested in taking road suits clear to the World Court at the Hague. I'd heard that morning that his company was paying some mighty fancy bonuses out in our county. I tried to laugh my way out of his remark. Drilling so far into the hard core of the earth must make those hombres cold and unforgiving. Before I could explain my new road policy, he'd excused himself and left.

Part of my trouble is that I know too many herders. You can't out and-out tell your colleagues that for the time being we'd better not draw attention to ourselves by gathering in too big bunches.

Just as sure as I go to the bank, there'll be a booted and hatted gent come tearing across the lobby and start a big deal over whether it's rained out west, or if I think calf prices will ever improve. I don't want to be high-hat, but we need to disband into as small groups as possible. I already feel like there's a price on our heads. I don't know but what it might be time to change costumes in favor of, say, a set of false whiskers and maybe a pair of dark glasses.

Stress on the fanciers of hollow hors and woolies has been so intense that all of us talk louder than we realize. Our notes must be on the same 180-day cycle. It seems that every time I go in for renewal, I fall in with a bunch of guys that look worse than a pair of run over mail order boots.

You can't steer the talk to precious metals or anything else but weather and market failures. I wish the drive-in system at the jugs had been extended to loans and chattels. Until it starts raining, I am going to be more careful when I go to town. As tough as everything is I sure don't want to go down for a fall because of the company I keep.

Big soggy clouds have been floating over the Shortgrass Country and drenching the far Western part of Texas. We are on the verge of the big comeback, I'd like to handle

these last days of economic hardship with grand dignity. I bet if I ever make a lot of money, I'll even forgive all my enemies.